

THE  
ANNUAL REPORT  
OF THE  
MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH  
TO THE  
PENZANCE URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL  
FOR THE YEAR 1898.

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PENZANCE :

BEARE AND SON, STEAM PRINTERS, 21, MARKET PLACE.



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GENTLEMEN,

I beg to present my Report for the year 1898.

**Inspection of the District: House Accommodation  
and Repairs.**

During the year all parts of the District have been inspected. In number the houses within the Borough would appear to be adequate to the needs of the resident population. 43 new houses (mostly six-roomed tenements) were built and certified in 1898. 19 tenements (two to four-roomed) were acquired by the Corporation during the year in connection with the scheme for the ultimate widening of Green Street. These are let at rents of from £5 : 4 : 0 to £8 a year. The properties are old, and will need constant attention so long as they are maintained as dwelling-houses. Your Corporation as landlord has made a good start in effecting necessary repairs and, I have no doubt, will live up to its responsibilities so long as the tenements remain.

45 houses within the Borough have during the year been repaired on notice from your Authority. Two cases of overcrowding were removed by ejectment, and in both cases the houses, which were structurally unsatisfactory, were closed and still remain unoccupied.

To the question of overcrowding my attention has been especially directed during the year, and the result of a particular investigation of alleged cases has served to confirm the opinion I have formed, on general inspection, that pronounced overcrowding within the Borough is but infrequent and casual. It is true that in many cases, and notably in the housing of the families of casual labourers at 2/- to 3/- a week, technical overcrowding exists. Fortunately in the older and cheaper properties in the town rooms are often of large size, a fact which mitigates an evil which, because of the ratio of rent to wages earned among the poorer workers, undoubtedly exists. The worst cases here within my experience have arisen in connection with recently imported families, and have promptly received the attention and treatment of your Sanitary Authority.



### **School Buildings.**

At the (otherwise well constructed) new St. Mary's National Schools, I note that the cloak-rooms for scholars are unventilated and unwarmed. Wet cloaks need drying, and it would be wise to prevent the admission of infectious germs, from time to time present, into the class-rooms through the cloak-room door-way.

At the old St. Mary's National Schools, intended for the occupation of the Infants' Department at an early date, I note with satisfaction the improvements being effected by the remaking of the closets and urinals under the advice and supervision of our Sanitary Department. Here the previous archaic arrangements are being replaced by an installation of Twyford's Syphonic Latrines, automatically flushed.

### **Common Lodging Houses.**

I have pleasure in reporting the closing of the Common Lodging House referred to as unsatisfactory in previous Reports. The one remaining is registered, periodically inspected, and at all times maintained in good condition.

### **Drainage.**

Since the diversion of the sewer at Stanford Terrace I have heard no complaints of flooding in the properties below. It is to be hoped that the new Surface Drainage in the neighbourhood of the Railway Station will be attended with like happy result.

### **Water-Supply.**

In a year of exceptionally small rainfall (the first nine months yielding under 17 inches), our water-supply (in so far as quantity is concerned) has answered admirably, inasmuch as our ~~large~~ storage reservoirs, replenished from the Boscathnoe Well, have given us a constant service throughout. I am pleased to hear a suggestion that the storage in the reservoirs be heightened a few feet. Should this be found practicable I am of opinion that, while materially increasing the quantity of water at our service, it will improve the quality by causing a lessening of the amount of vegetable growth in the reservoirs. Against the expense may thus be fairly set off some part of the present annual cost of cleansing.

During the year the water-supply has been laid on to 41 new houses within the Borough.

### **Public Urinals, Closets, &c.**

I congratulate your Authority on having during the year made proper provision for the accommodation of women at the Morrab Gardens.

The dark, ill-ventilated, ill-flushed, Davy urinal remains unaltered—an unmitigated public nuisance.

The Railway Station closets and urinals are maintained in very good condition.





### **Scavenging.**

The scavenging of the Borough by your Authority continues to be in the main well conducted. In one respect a word of caution appears to be necessary. No dust-barrel should under any circumstances be transferred from one tenement to another without intermediate cleansing and airing in the town yard.

### **Bakehouses, Slaughter-houses, Dairies, Cowsheds, and Milk-shops.**

There are in the Borough 19 bakehouses, 18 slaughter-houses, 28 dairies and milk-shops, and two cowsheds. All are registered and regularly inspected.

In the early part of the year a nuisance arose in connection with one of the slaughter-houses, situated near an edge of the Borough, caused by the undue exposure of offal on adjoining pasture land. This was remedied at the time, and no further cause of complaint has occurred.

### **Vaccination.**

The Vaccination Acts have been for years most laxly administered throughout the Union. Large numbers of children remain unprotected, and I have not heard of any prosecution for some years. Not many "conscientious objectors" have appeared in the courts, and it is to be hoped that the recent insistence of the Local Government Board upon the responsibilities of Vaccination Officers, and the substitution of calf for human lymph, may lead to a more general fulfilment of the law.

### **Seizure of Food and "Sale of Food and Drugs" Act.**

During the year 75 lbs. of meat were seized in the Meat Market and destroyed.

Two samples of water were analysed, and two of milk. No prosecutions were necessary. I recommend further analyses from time to time.

### **Interim Reports during the Year.**

During the year <sup>fortnightly</sup> ~~bi-monthly~~ reports dealing with sickness, deaths, nuisances, defects in dwelling-houses, water-fittings, &c. (the outcome of constant inspection), have been regularly made to your Authority by the Medical Officer of Health, Sanitary Inspector, and Borough Plumber; and the usual monthly reports have been sent to the Chairman of the Cornwall County Council Sanitary Committee.

One special report was made to your Authority, in February, in connection with the Influenza Epidemic and the closing of the Elementary Schools. Copies of this were at the same time forwarded to the County Council and to the Local Government Board.

### **Tables A and B—Vital Statistics.**

I ask your attention to the Tables of Vital Statistics for the year 1898, enclosed with the official copy of this Report.





302 births (168 male, 134 female) were registered during the year. 222 deaths (113 male, 109 female) were recorded. These figures give a natural increase of 80, a birth-rate of 24·16, a general death-rate of 17·76. The death-rate, corrected by exclusion of visitors' deaths, is 16·72 per 1,000. The infantile mortality is 255 per 1,000 births, the zymotic death-rate 2·64 per 1,000 living; infantile summer Diarrhœa being mainly responsible for the excessive amount of both.

Included in the deaths are those of 13 persons not belonging to the district. Of these, seven took place within the West Cornwall Infirmary, viz.—two from injuries, one from Heart-disease, one from Chronic Phthisis, one from Cancer, one from Cerebral Hæmorrhage, and one from Rheumatic Fever. This last, which occurred in the person of a young market-gardener from Madron, is notable as being a rare cause of death among us. Other deaths of visitors were:—one from Broncho-pneumonia (in infancy), one from Heart-disease, two from Brain-affections, and one from Phthisis of six years' standing. The 13th was an inquest case, in which a verdict of "Death from natural causes" was returned.

Of the deaths of our own people, one took place at the West Cornwall Infirmary from injury, 14 were from Heart-disease, 37 from Respiratory diseases, 13 from Phthisis (a low proportion), one from Influenza (at 77), one from Erysipelas (at 82), one from Scarlet Fever (at three years), one from Typhoid Fever (at 21 months), nine from Whooping Cough (eight under five years of age), and 21 from Diarrhœa (20 being cases of summer Diarrhœa in infants).

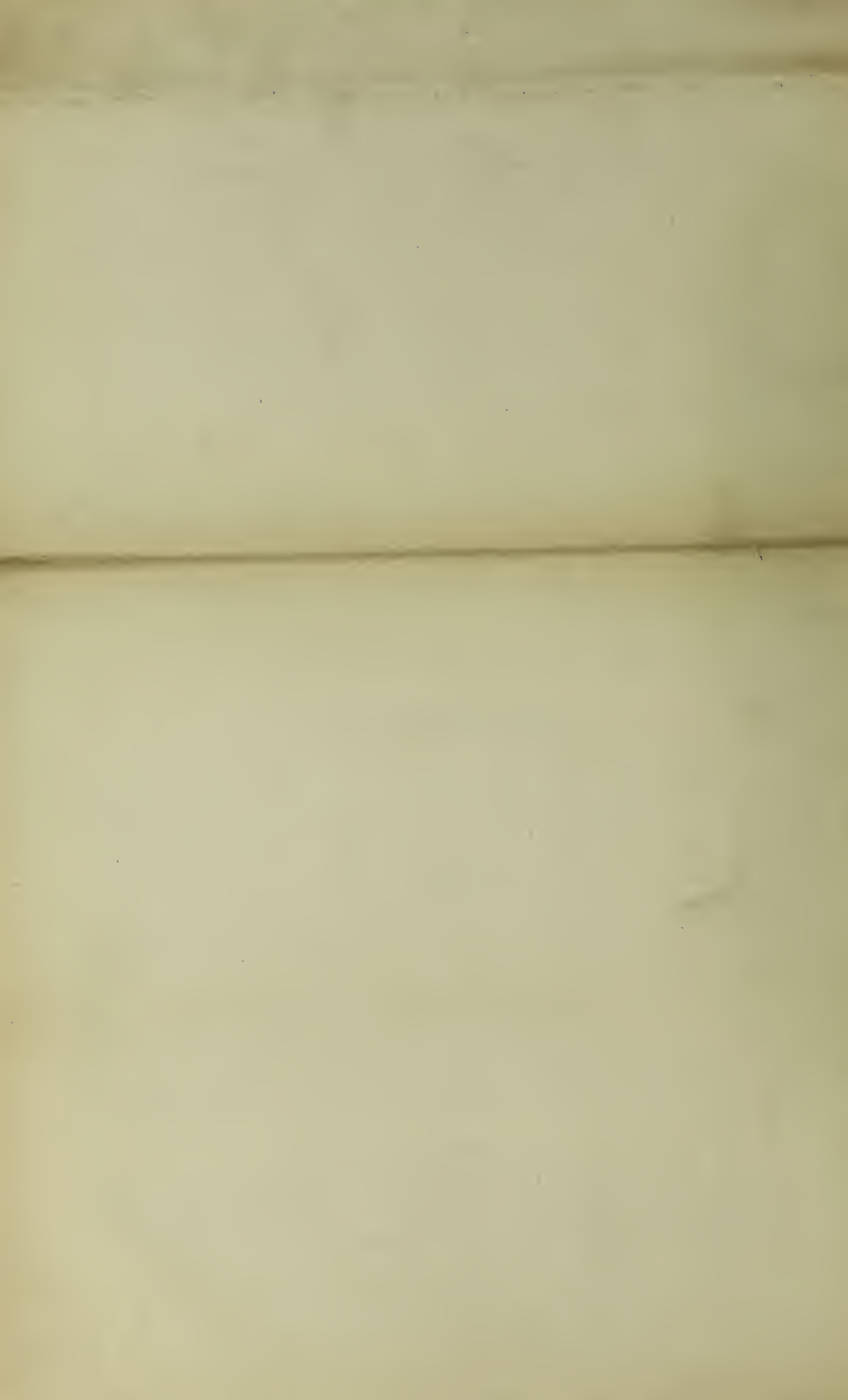
### **The Influenza Epidemic.**

Influenza was prevalent during the first three months of the year. The death therefrom took place on the 2nd April, but the largest number of cases seemed to exist during the month of February, at which time also is noted an exceptional mortality from Respiratory diseases and from Phthisis. In this month the death-rates of the old and of the very young (and especially of the latter) were raised to a high figure in the Bronchitis and Pneumonia table. January was a sunless, humid month, and in February 26 of the 28 are recorded as "rainy days." February is responsible for 12 of the 37 deaths occurring from Respiratory disease throughout the year, and for 5 of the 15 deaths from Phthisis registered during the same period.

Learning on February 2nd that many teachers and scholars had recently become affected with Influenza I recommended the closing of the Elementary Schools until February 7th, to allow of their cleansing and free ventilation. This was done, and appeared to have a marked effect in preventing further extension of the malady.

### **Summer Diarrhœa.**

Three deaths took place in July, 14 in August, and three in September, making a total of 20,—all under 13 months of age. In 1897 17 deaths occurred from this cause, and in 1896 five. It may be remarked that the summers were hotter



in the years of the larger returns. In many cases that I saw, the inception and continuance of the Diarrhœa was associated with improper feeding. In the majority of these, nature's fount, the breast, had been prematurely supplemented or supplanted by "Infants' Foods," farinaceous stuffs, or "pickings of what we belong to have ourselves." I would take this opportunity of corroborating all that has recently been said as to the great and irremediable injury done to childhood by deplorable ignorance in the matter of the dieting of infants. In other cases that I have seen, a lack of promptness on the part of parents in realizing the special danger of Diarrhœa at a season of epidemic has appeared to delay reasonable treatment, and to have determined a fatal end in cases which it is almost certain would otherwise have been saved.

### **Whooping Cough.**

Whooping Cough has been prevalent during the last five months of the year, and has been attended by nine deaths of young children. It is strange that many parents regard with indifference, and oppose with such little care, the progress of one of the deadliest diseases among children.

### **Notifiable Diseases.**

One imported case of Measles was notified in April, but does not appear to have been followed by any others.

Twenty cases of Scarlatina were reported during the year; most seem to have been of separate origin. One case, in a child, was fatal. Two were removed to the Borough Isolation Hospital, whence one after three weeks', the other after six-and-half weeks' stay, were discharged convalescent. In all cases teachers of Schools were advised, and children of the affected households excluded for proper periods. The boarding-out of workers from within the household and compensation for isolation of guardians of the sick were also, where necessary, arranged. The Librarian of the Free Library was advised in all cases as to issue and return of books.

Thirteen cases of Erysipelas were notified, and in the case of a person at 82 years of age death was attributed to this cause.

Three cases of Typhoid Fever were notified, one resulting in the death of an infant at 21 months of age. No cause of infection or insanitary conditions were found in the case of either.

### **Tuberculosis.**

The question of the prevention and treatment of this widespread and fatal disease has been attracting of late the especial attention of the medical and of the lay mind. Important points involved are—(1) prevention of infection from cattle; (2) check of spread from human beings; (3) erection of Sanatoria for treatment of patients.





Infection from cattle comes chiefly through the milk of cows, and mainly affects young children. This is fortunately preventable by the simple process of boiling of milk, a practice which cannot be too strongly urged on parents, and which, rigidly carried out, would reduce to a minimum the entire list of tuberculous affections in infancy and childhood. In the matter of infectiveness through meat, skilled inspection in public slaughter-houses and efficient cooking within the household are necessary preventive measures. The "tuberculin" test is being more and more widely applied to cattle throughout the country, and especially to beasts intended for exportation. The penalty of neglect thereof in the case of any particular district will inevitably be that it will more and more become the dumping ground of uncertain animals and of those which are proved to be infected.

The limitation of spread from human beings rests mainly with consumptives themselves and their attendants. Reckless spitting into handkerchiefs, non-ventilation of the rooms they inhabit, and the senseless exclusion of sunlight therefrom are evils to which it is to be hoped the present crusade will attract attention. In one respect Sanitary Authorities would appear to be able to render valuable service in the protection of the community: Section 46 of the Public Health Act, 1875, provides for the compulsory cleansing of any house or part of a house where such cleansing would tend to prevent or check infectious disease, and I venture to think that effect should be given to this provision after removal of any consumptive, by death or otherwise, from any ascertained dwelling. Short of this, may I say that I shall be personally most willing to advise any householder or other, on application, as to necessary methods of disinfection in any such case.

Now that the sunlight and fresh air treatment of Tuberculosis would appear to be rightly appreciated, a movement is on foot throughout the country to establish properly constructed Sanatoria for such cases. Our own local Tuberculosis returns are happily below the average, but our equable climate possesses proved advantages to a large class of consumptives, and the movement will certainly fail of full effect if one or more Sanatoria be not erected somewhere in West Cornwall.

### **Hospital Accommodation.**

Our Hospital accommodation for infectious cases continues to be limited to the provision of four beds within doors and of a small tent for use on the Hospital site outside the Borough. Should a Smallpox epidemic arrive within our inefficiently protected community a slight spread will quickly exhaust our slender resources, and it will be useless to trust to hasty vaccinations and re-vaccinations to take the place of a sufficiency of means of isolation of the affected. I hope you will resume your consideration of the building of a new and larger Infectious Diseases Hospital, equipped with Steam Disinfector, &c., a matter which has of late unhappily fallen into the background.

### **Mortuary.**

Your Authority is to be congratulated on having obtained permission of the Board of the West Cornwall Infirmary to make use of the Mortuary on their





premises in case of death from non-infectious causes. The case of deaths from infectious disease still remains unprovided for.

### **Comparison of Rates with previous Years.**

This year our birth-rate is lower than last year's, our death-rate a little higher. Both are slightly below the average of the estimates of preceding years. Our zymotic death-rate and infant mortality are unhappily high, both being largely raised, as has been said, by the undue proportion of deaths from summer Diarrhœa among children.

I am, Gentlemen,

Faithfully yours,

RICHARD DAVEY BOASE,

*Medical Officer of Health, Penzance.*

5, MORRAB ROAD,  
PENZANCE,

*January 30th, 1899.*



PENZANCE CLIMATOLOGICAL RECORD FOR 1898

(Under the supervision of the Royal Meteorological Society).

TEMPERATURE.

	JAN.	FEB.	MAR.	APRIL.	MAY.	JUNE.	JULY.	AUG.	SEPT.	OCT.	NOV.	DEC.
Maximum .. ..	56° 5	57° 0	59° 0	61° 0	62° 0	69° 5	74° 0	78° 0	72° 5	66° 2	61° 0	56° 0
Minimum .. ..	38° 0	34° 0	32° 5	37° 0	42° 0	46° 5	50° 0	50° 0	46° 5	46° 2	35° 0	40° 0
Mean Maximum ..	52° 23	51° 52	50° 82	56° 81	57° 32	63° 68	68° 32	68° 89	67° 63	60° 72	55° 24	53° 01
Mean Minimum ..	46° 23	42° 21	39° 18	45° 07	48° 53	52° 36	56° 81	57° 95	55° 82	52° 84	46° 86	47° 63
Mean of Means ..	49° 23	46° 86	45° 0	50° 94	52° 92	58° 02	62° 56	63° 42	61° 72	56° 78	51° 04	50° 34
Mean Range .. ..	6° 0	9° 31	11° 64	11° 74	8° 79	11° 32	11° 51	10° 94	11° 81	7° 88	8° 38	5° 34

Mean of Maxima .. .. .	64° 39.
Mean of Minima .. .. .	43° 14.
Mean Temperature for Year .. .. .	54° 07.
Mean Temperature of Winter Months .. .. .	49° 87.
Winter Mean Range .. .. .	8° 08.
Total Sunshine .. .. .	1876 hours 15 minutes.
Average Daily Sunshine .. .. .	5 hours 8 minutes 9 seconds.
Mean Humidity .. .. .	78·7.
Rainfall during Year .. .. .	33·74 inches.

NOTE.

The Temperature did not fall to freezing point any time during the year, 32°5 in March being the lowest recorded.

CHARLES H. BENN, F.R. MET. SOC.,  
*Borough Meteorologist.*

